

Message Text

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DRAFTED BY NEA/INS:JELEADER:GMD

APPROVED BY NEA:MR. SISCO

NEA/INS:LBLAINGEN

NEA/INS;DKUX

S/S- MR. MILLER

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TO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO IMMEDIATE

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CE, XF, PFOR

SUBJECT: MIDDLE EAST: AMB. KANAKARATNE CALL ON ASST. SECY.

SISCO

1. CEYLONese AMBASSADOR KANAKARATNE MET ASST. SECY. SISCO OCT. 17 TO CONVEY MESSAGE FROM PRIME MINISTER BANDARARANAIKE TO PRESIDENT (TEXT SENT SEPTTEL NOTAL) ENCOURAGING US CONSIDERATION OF SADAT MID EAST PEACE PROPOSAL. AMB. STATED GSL WISHED RELEASE MESSAGE BUT WANTED FIRST TO CONSULT WITH U.S.

2. MR. SISCO OUTLINED HIS UNDERSTANDING OF SADAT PROPOSAL INCLUDING PROVISION FOR CEASEFIRE LINKED TO RETURN TO PRE-1967 WAR BORDER AND PEACE CONFERENCE WITH PALESTINIAN PARTICIPATION. HE REPORTED THAT WE HAD KNOWN THE EGYPTIAN VIEWS FOR SOME TIME AND WE HAD GIVEN THE EGYPTIANS OUR VIEWS ON THE PROPOSAL SOME DAYS AGO. HE ADDED THAT THIS WAS THE ONLY SPECIFIC COMMENT HE WOULD MAKE ON THE PRIME MINISTER'S LETTER.

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3. MR. SISCO THEN OUTLINED THE US APPROACH TO THE PROBLEM: WE HAD MADE EFFORTS TO PREVENT FIGHTING BEFORE IT BROKE OUT. WE TOLD BOTH THE USSR AND EGYPT THAT NO PREEMPTIVE ISRAELI STRIKE WAS CONTEMPLATED TO ASSURE THAT THIS CON-

SIDERATION WAS NOT THE CAUSE OF THE ARAB BUILD-UP. AFTER HOSTILITIES COMMENCED WE HAD BEEN ENGAGED IN EFFORTS TO

END THE WAR. OUR FIRST PUBLIC STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR SCALI IN THE UN SUGGESTED NO FIXED PROPOSALS OR RESOLUTIONS BUT EXPRESSED SOME TENTATIVE IDEAS INCLUDING CESSATION OF HOSTILITIES ON CONDITIONS CONDUCTIVE TO DIPLOMACY WHICH WE BELIEVED WERE BEST SERVED BY A RETURN TO POSITIONS HELD BEFORE THE RECENT OUTBREAK OF HOSTILITIES. THEN NEGOTIATIONS COULD START.

4. THIS APPROACH WAS BASED ON OUR INITIAL MILITARY ASSESSMENT IN FIRST FEW DAYS ASSUMING THAT ISRAEL WOULD ACHIEVE A QUICK VICTORY AND THAT ARAB TOE WOULD BE PINCHED IN FEW DAYS AND ISRAELI TOE SUBSEQUENTLY. OUR ASSESSMENT OF A QUICK WAR WAS WRONG. IN LAST FEW DAYS WE HAVE BEEN TALKING OF A CEASEFIRE IN PLACE BUT WE HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO GAIN A CONSENSUS ON THIS; NEITHER SIDE WANTS TO STOP FIGHTING.

5. WHAT IS VERY CLEAR NOW IS THAT THE MIDDLE EAST SCENE HAS CHANGED FUNDAMENTALLY. THE BUBBLE OF ISRAELI INVINCIBILITY HAS BEEN BURST AND THE ARAB HUMILIATION OF THE 1967 WAR ERASED. WE THINK THIS SITUATION OFFERS NEW OPPORTUNITIES WITH NEGOTIATIONS HOPEFULLY TO COME IN THE AFTERMATH OF A CEASEFIRE. THE SADAT PROPOSAL AS NOTED IN PRIME MINISTER BANDARANAIKE'S LETTER LINKS A CEASEFIRE TO A RETURN TO THE PRE-1967 LINES. IN OUR JUDGMENT SUCH A PROPOSAL IS NOT OBTAINABLE IN THE PRESENT MILITARY SITUATION AND WE DO NOT THINK THE ARABS CAN OBTAIN THAT OBJECTIVE BY MILITARY MEANS. THUS WE THINK LINKING OF A CEASEFIRE WITH A RETURN TO PRE-1967 LINES IS UNREALISTIC AND SUCH A POSTURE WILL ASSURE THAT FIGHTING CONTINUES. WE WANT THE CEYLONESE, AS FRIENDS, TO UNDERSTAND THE LOGIC OF THIS.

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6. MR. SISCO EMPHASIZED THAT WE WILL WORK TO DEVELOP A CONSENSUS TO PRODUCE A CEASEFIRE TO BE FOLLOWED BY SOME MOVE TOWARDS A FUNDAMENTAL SETTLEMENT. HE NOTED THAT THE PRESIDENT AND THE SECRETARY MET OCT. 17 WITH 4 ARAB FOREIGN MINISTERS AND THAT THE SAUDI MIN. OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, UMAR SAQQAF CHARACTERIZED IT AS A "USEFUL MEETING". MR. SISCO STATED OUR READINESS TO PLAY A CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE FOR A FUNDAMENTAL SETTLEMENT WHICH WILL BE AGREEABLE TO BOTH SIDES. WHAT WE DON'T WANT IS A SITUATION WHICH THE USSR CAN EXPLOIT FOR ITS OWN ENDS. HE NOTED THAT THE CEYLONESE WOULD APPRECIATE THAT DANGER.

7. MR. SISCO ACKNOWLEDGED CEYLONESE SYMPATHY FOR THE

ARABS AND NOTED THAT THERE HAVE BEEN INJUSTICES. BUT
IN THE PRESENT SITUATION THE US WANTS TO MAKE NO VALUE

JUDGMENT OR ASSESS BLAME. OUR INTEREST IS NOT MERELY A
TRUCE OR CEASEFIRE BUT TO GET A PROCESS STARTED TOWARDS
SOLUTION WHICH WILL BRING ABOUT PEACE.

8. AMB. KANAKARATNE RESPONDED THAT HIS GOVERNMENT
BELIEVED THAT THE ARAB NATIONS HAD A LIMITED OBJECTIVE,
TO RECOVER THEIR LOST LAND. MR. SISCO AGREED THAT ARABS
HAD STATED LIMITED OBJECTIVES.

9. AMBASSADOR KANAKARATNE EXPRESSED HIS APPRECIATION FOR
MR. SISCO'S BRIEFING. HE SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THE PRIME
MINISTER HAD SENT A LETTER TO BREZHNEV SIMILAR TO THE
LETTER CONVEYED TO PRESIDENT NIXON AND THAT THE PRIME
MINISTER HAD ASKED IF WE OBJECTED TO PUBLICATION OF THE
LETTER. MR. SISCO RESPONDED THAT WE APPRECIATED THE
COURTESY OF CHECKING WITH US, THAT HE WOULD TRY TO BE
BACK IN TOUCH ON THIS QUESTION, BUT THAT IN THE FINAL
ANALYSIS PUBLICATION WOULD HAVE TO BE DECIDED BY THE
CEYLONESE. KISSINGER

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